

Office of Congressman Charles W. Dent
Proudly Representing Pennsylvania's 15th District



For Immediate Release
March 7, 2006

Contact: Gregg W. Bortz
610-861-9734 or (cell) 202-222-5118

**Congressman Dent proposes renaming
Bethlehem Post Office after city's long-serving
Mayor H. Gordon Payrow Jr.**

U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent has introduced a bill to rename the Bethlehem Post Office at 535 Wood St. in honor of the city's late mayor, H. Gordon Payrow Jr.

Mr. Payrow served as Bethlehem's first "strong mayor" under its current form of government from 1962-74. Mayor Payrow is credited with leading the construction of City Hall Plaza, which the city renamed in his honor shortly after his death in 2004.

"Mayor Payrow led the City of Bethlehem during an era of tremendous growth and change," Congressman Dent said. "Never one to back away from controversy, he was highly regarded for his dedication to public service and his vision of a unified city."

H. Gordon Payrow, Jr. was born on February 4, 1918, the same year three boroughs united to form the City of Bethlehem. The city operated under a commission form of government, in which the mayor was a member of council, for more than 40 years. The city changed its charter in the late 1950s to create a more centralized government.

Upon his inauguration in 1962 as the first mayor under the new charter, Mayor Payrow said, "Today marks the end of the North Side, South Side, and West Side. From here on we will only think of Bethlehem." It was

with this in mind he guided the project to build a new centralized City Hall Plaza.

Gordon Payrow's accomplishments as a public servant and citizen left a tremendous legacy in the Christmas City. On his watch Bethlehem hired its first female police officer. Mayor Payrow oversaw the creation of the city's Fine Arts Commission, the Beautification Committee, and the Environmental Conservation Commission, and he was also instrumental in laying the groundwork for a massive revitalization of Bethlehem's downtown area.

During his three terms, the Mayor worked to construct several fire stations, to demolish blighted housing developments, and to oversee the replacement and construction of several bridges critical to the transportation infrastructure of the city of Bethlehem. Some of his actions were controversial at the time, but critics and supporters alike recognized him as a man of integrity and skill who selflessly served his city and its constituents.

After leaving office, Mr. Payrow remained deeply involved in the community. He often had breakfast with city leaders and wrote letters to local newspapers on pertinent issues. He also helped found the Bethlehem Area Jaycees, getting thousands involved with community service projects. For recreation, he enjoyed bird-watching, refinishing antique furniture, and canoeing down the Lehigh River.

Mayor Payrow died in April 2004 at the age of 86. He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Dorothy. Mayor Payrow once said that marrying Dorothy was "the best thing I did in my life."

The bill to designate the H. Gordon Payrow Post Office has been referred to the House Government Reform Committee, of which Congressman Dent is a member. It is expected to be considered in committee this week.

"Although the Bethlehem Post Office on Wood Street opened after he left office, the building certainly fit the theme of Mayor Payrow's tenure — a modern, centralized facility for a growing city," Congressman Dent said.

Congressman Dent has also secured the renaming of Allentown's Post Office at Fifth and Hamilton streets after that city's long-serving mayor, the

late Joseph Dadonna. The President signed that bill into law in November, 2005.

###